United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Situation in Somalia and Secretary-General's latest recommendations for more forceful approach to securing humanitarian relief operations in that country are subject of Security Council consultations this afternoon.

+ Human Rights Commission, concluding two-day special session in Geneva today, calls on all States to consider extent to which acts committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia constitute genocide.

+ Israel describes in Assembly functioning of its proposed democratically elected Palestinian administrative council to deal with day-to-day Palestinian affairs; Saudi Arabia insists there must be complete Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands, foremost among them Holy City of Jerusalem.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to send two teams to Armenia and Azerbaijan with emergency aid for over 750,000 refugees and people displaced by conflict in disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

+ Secretary-General tells Assembly, marking World AIDS Day, of creation of United Nations interagency advisory group to meet regularly and to create "coordinated and effective response" to the AIDS endemic.

+ Secretary-General says timetable for implementing El Salvador Peace Agreement appears to be on schedule; receives letter from President Cristiani on Government's compliance.

+ High-level meeting in Geneva on 4 December to review humanitarian effort in ex-Yugoslavia, led by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

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Before the Council began its deliberations, the Hungarian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, André Erdos, told correspondents that "a possible scenario" could be an operation where the command and control functions could be played by the United States and where strong institutional links could be secured between the United Nations and the United States.

He said the difference between "Desert Storm" in the Persian Gulf war and a possible operation in Somalia was that the latter would strengthen and make more visible United Nations authority, as recommended by the Secretary-General. According to his plan, United Nations staff would be assigned to the operation both at Headquarters and in the field and an ad hoc committee of the Security Council would visit Somalia and report regularly on developments there.

The Secretary-General's recommendations on how to secure the humanitarian relief operations in Somalia were published yesterday in a letter by Mr. Boutros-Ghali addressed to the Security Council.

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The United Nations Human Rights Commission, concluding a two-day special session in Geneva today, called on all States to consider the extent to which acts committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia constitute genocide. The resolution was approved by 45 countries, with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) opposing it and Cuba abstaining.

The Commission condemned ethnic cleansing and put the blame mainly on the Serbian leadership in Bosnia, the Yugoslav army and the political leadership of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). It called on all parties, particularly the Serbian leadership in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), to use whatever influence they have to put an end to ethnic cleansing and to reverse the effects of the practice by allowing refugees to return to their homes.

It also called for the closure of detention camps, the opening of humanitarian relief corridors and the creation of security zones to protect displaced people.

The special session - the Commission's second such session this year to consider the human rights situation in the former Yugoslav republics - was called at the request of the Governments of Turkey and the United States.

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A political settlement of the situation in the territories needed to be reached in stages, the first of which was autonomy, the representative of Israel said this morning in the General Assembly. Speaking in the Assembly's continuing debate on the question of Palestine, he said the Israeli Government had proposed a democratically elected Palestinian administrative council which

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would, under the interim self-government arrangement, assume broad powers and responsibilities to deal with the vast majority of the Palestinians' day-to-day affairs.

The proposed council, he stated, would administer operations within 15 spheres, such as: administration of justice; agriculture; finance, budget and taxation; industry and commerce; social welfare; and tourism. The executive general powers it would wield within those spheres of operation would include the power to promulgate regulations and by-laws.

The representative of Saudi Arabia told the Assembly there could be no real peace in the Middle East without a just and permanent solution to the Palestinian question. There must be a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab lands, foremost among which was the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The representative of Indonesia proposed that the occupied territories be placed under United Nations protection during the transition period. Various speakers called on the United Nations to take an active role in facilitating the success of the peace process and welcomed its direct participation in the multilateral peace negotiations.

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In its first emergency aid programme for people in the former Soviet Union, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is dispatching two emergency teams to bring assistance to the more than 750,000 refugees and internally displaced people in Armenia and Azerbaijan. The six-month, $6-million operation, launched at the request of the two Republics, will aid victims of the ethnic conflict involving the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

A special UNHCR-chartered aircraft is scheduled to leave Geneva on Wednesday evening for the capitals of the the two Republics carrying two five-member teams of emergency relief specialists, radio equipment and other field supplies. Initially, UNHCR activities will focus on housing of 145,500 people considered the most vulnerable in the harsh winter months ahead.

The UNHCR will be bringing in blankets, plastic sheeting and thousands of tons of food. It will also construct 300 homes for the needy in Azerbaijan, and will help repair community buildings in the two Republics.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali this afternoon told a meeting of the General Assembly marking World AIDS Day that he had created a single interagency advisory group within the United Nations system, with strengthened terms of reference. The group, which had held its first meeting last month, would meet regularly and was committed to create a "coordinated and effective response" to the AIDS endemic, Mr. Boutros-Ghali said.

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Noting that AIDS demanded a multi-sectoral, integrated approach from the United Nations, he recalled his report to the Economic and Social Council earlier this year in which he stressed that "the need for the United Nations to mount a comprehensive and coordinated response" was clear. There were now 135 national AIDS programmes in operation, which have been planned, set up and assisted through the collaboration of United Nations bodies and agencies, governments and the private and voluntary sector, the Secretary-General said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the HIV virus has infected about 11 to 13 million people worldwide. More than two million people have developed AIDS and most of them have died. WHO further estimates that by the end of this decade the virus will have infected 30 to 40 million people.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today in a statement that it appeared that the timetable of the implementation of the Peace Agreements for El Salvador was unfolding essentially on schedule and that if all other undertakings were complied with as foreseen, it would be possible to complete the cease-fire stage of the peace process on 15 December.

In a statement issued by his Spokesman, the Secretary-General confirmed that he had received a letter of 29 November from President Cristiani of El Salvador informing him of administrative decisions made by the President with regard to the purification of the armed Forces. The Government had thus complied with its commitment under the Peace Agreement. The Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberacion Nacional (FMLN) was due to provide the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) with a final inventory of weapons and to begin their destruction, the statement said. This would be followed by the resumption by the Government of the dissolution of military units as previously agreed.

The Security Council yesterday extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) for another six months until the end of May and urged the two parties to respect scrupulously the peace agreements.

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Representatives from more than 50 nations and international organizations are expected in Geneva on Friday, 4 December, for a high-level review of the humanitarian effort in the former Yugoslavia, led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The feasibility of safe zones and the need for the international community to keep its doors open to those fleeing the fighting are amongst the issues to be considered.

Under the chairmanship of High Commissioner Sadako Ogata, participants will examine the seven elements of the Comprehensive Response for former Yugoslavia that was endorsed at a ministerial conference in Geneva on 29

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July. Those components are: human rights, preventive protection, humanitarian access, special humanitarian needs, temporary protection for refugees, material assistance, and return and rehabilitation.

According to a working paper prepared for the meeting, over 3 million refugees, displaced and otherwise affected people - about 1.7 million of them in Bosnia and Herzegovina - are now in need of humanitarian aid. The paper stresses the primary need to find a lasting political solution to the conflict, saying that without that, "there is a serious risk of a massive and prolonged refugee problem and, potentially, a widening of the conflict".

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